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**THE PORTRAYAL OF OLDER ADULTS
IN CONSUMER MAGAZINES**

A Thesis presented to the
Department of Communication and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha

By

Bonnie Gill

November, 1998

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THESIS ACCEPTANCE

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Thank you to committee members Dr. Michael Sherer, Dr. Michael Hilt, and Dr. James Thorson for their individual contributions to the study. Also thanks to my husband Dr. Mark Manhart for his patience and editing comments, and a dear colleague Anita Ekstrom for her help and support.

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ABSTRACT

The Portrayal of Older Adults in Consumer Magazines

By Bonnie Gill

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University of Nebraska at Omaha, 1998

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Images of older adults in the news and advertising media contribute to the way society learns about aging. Visual presentations become increasingly important in our society of information overload where shortcuts are taken through graphics and sound bites. Perceptions are created instantly. There has been little recent research with the portrayal and representation of our aging society in general consumer magazines during the 1990s. There have been no studies that combine both news/feature and advertising photographs. This study seeks to add to the current literature about magazine portrayals of adults over age 65 through a content analysis of four national, large-circulation national magazines, *Reader's Digest*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Time* and *Sports Illustrated*. A content analysis of 30 issues over an 18-month period produced a total of 1,719 photographs of which 212 contained older adults. The statistical analysis shows an overwhelmingly positive portrayal with the exception of older women in advertisements. Older women were statistically under-represented to older men. Older adults in general revealed a wide range of representation across individual titles with only slight under-representation overall.

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Chapter 1

Older Adults Increasingly Become an Important Group to Study

With the graying of America, adults over age 50 continue to attract the attention of the media, marketers, and researchers. The elderly have long endured many stereotypes and struggled to be recognized in the mass media over the last 45 years. From little notice in the 1950s to stereotypes in the 1960s and 1970s, elderly portrayals in the 1990s have evolved to rich vacationers, an affluent group fighting for their rights at the expense of the next generation. Pressures from older celebrities, the aging baby boomers and political advocacy groups demand that the media adequately represent the aging population with positive portrayals. And yet, the research literature presents a wide-range of findings.

Mass media plays a vital role in linking older adults to the larger society and creating perceptions of aging for all groups. Therefore, the portrayal of the elderly is a powerful and important concept to investigate. McQuail (1994) discusses normative theory wherein values govern media content, and audiences attribute their values to different media for different purposes.

Media are viewed by their audiences within a complex framework of expectation and judgment. This framework may not be routinely activated, but it is ever present in the background. The values... stem from traditional judgments embedded in the culture (p.311).

These judgments play an intricate role in the formation of stereotypes as well.

Stereotypes encompass complex relationships that make them difficult to explain or understand. They are handed down from generation to generation and are influenced by what we see as well as experience. Stereotypes are formed through education, family background, culture, morals, political views, literature and mass media. The elderly experience more stereotypes than any other age group and have become an increasing concern for researchers to examine the breadth of these stereotypes and the attitudes they effect. Depending on the perspective of the researcher, the wide-range of studies on mass media and the aged both condemn and justify stereotypes and the attitudes they influence. These stereotypes are typically identified through representation and portrayal of the elderly. The increasing influence of commercialism between news and advertising departments in the United States media makes responsibility difficult to assign. The debate ensues and the questions remain. Are the media totally responsible for our culture's view of the elderly, negative or positive? Should mass media or specialized media address our aging population?

Magazines comprise one focus of research with media and aging, especially in advertising. Images created through advertising photographs have been examined due to their convenience, popularity and reflection of reality. Magazines rank third and fourth in activities Americans enjoy in their leisure time (Robinson, 1993; Spring, 1993). A magazine photograph is an abstraction of reality, reflecting its culture and social relations. Magazines create a personal bond with the reader who sets his own time and pace to read, reread and enjoy. The news, features, and advertising surrounding the image found in photographs influence its interpretation as well as the viewers'

preconceived thoughts (Hurlburt, 1972). Unlike other visuals, advertisements and news/feature photographs hold an intentional meaning reinforced by captions and culture.

Pictures remain in one's memory bank. Many can remember images such as the Marines who raised the flag on Iwo Jima, President Kennedy hunched over his desk during the Cuban Missile Crisis, the young women kneeling over the dead protestor at Kent State, the Vietnamese girl running naked after the Napalm bomb strike, or the man stopping the tank in Beijing. While these images are certainly more dramatic than everyday photographs of the elderly, the pervasive repeated image of the elderly is no less memorable, no less influential in molding perceptions within society. Symbolically, people in photographs represent sophistication, wealth, generosity, physical prowess, weakness, poverty, kindness, loneliness and other traits through the portrayals presented. Famous images of the painting "Whistler's Mother" to the Wendy's advertisement of Clara Peller in "Where's the Beef?" bring about instant reactions.

Studies related to the representation and portrayal of older people in media have been conducted in television, magazines, newspapers, cartoons, greeting cards and children's literature during the 1970s and 1980s. Researchers have been calling for additional work in this area (Atkin, 1976; Langmeyer, 1993; Robinson & Skill 1995), however few studies have been completed. The present study will look at a small part of the discussion: How are the elderly portrayed in popular consumer magazines? While findings are not intended to be conclusive, it is hoped that some aspects of the study will confirm previous work and identify areas for further investigation.

Chapter 2

Many Factors Influence the Portrayal of Aging

Literature Review

“A picture is worth a thousand words.” An old cliché? Or, a phrase that rings true when considering the influence images play in our lives? We live in a visual society where perception sometimes counts for more than reality, where a first impression can dictate our thoughts, feelings, and finally our actions. Images seem to have a permanent meaning unchanged over time due to their material existence according to Mike Hepworth (1995). This permanence is seen in the self-portraits of Rembrandt and other classics perceived as timeless records of the aging process by students in the field. Images have the ability to outlive their creators and give testimony to their historical times. Aging models in magazine copy from the 1950s do not portray the same 55 year-old model seen in the 1990s copy. To understand our perceptions and attitudes about aging, we must look back to the origins of the aging concept.

“Geriatric” is not a neutral. The term conjures up images of physical and mental decay, deterioration and isolation from social activity. These central features of the life cycle became popular during medieval times in Europe. The cycle of life depicted the pleasures of youth, the responsibilities of middle age and the woes of the elderly. The Western view of aging, however, dates back much further than the medieval days to the ancient times of Greece. The Greeks idolized youth and felt anyone who died young held

favor with the gods. They left this world in all their glory never to undergo the hardship and deterioration of age. American culture, influenced by the Greeks, has few roots in the Eastern culture where age is venerated for its creative adaptation to life and valued for the wisdom the elderly pass on to younger generations. This heritage of passing on history and one's skills is still alive and respected in agricultural and moderately developed areas, but the tradition is less important in industrialized economies where productivity is highly valued. Service and high tech information have replaced agricultural needs and historical references. The signs of aging disturb the Western cultural image of visual perfection because they reveal changes in the idealized human body. Therefore, aging is considered intrusive and only accepted in certain icons such as Father Time or the kindly grandmother. Considering we rarely see anything but the idealized, human figure in the media, it is difficult to remember the majority of the population is imperfect. It is also difficult to conceptualize our aging population.

Americans over age 65 represent 12.7 percent of the U.S. population or over 33.7 million adults. Experts predict this aging cohort will grow to 13 percent by the year 2000 and 18.5 percent by 2025, or a total of 50 million adults. By the year 2025 one in six Americans will be over age 65 (U.S. Statistical Abstract, 1997). In 1900, only 3.1 million Americans were over age 65 and the life expectancy was age 50. In 1990, fewer than one in ten elderly persons were 85 or older. By 2045, there will be one in five (Longino, 1994). Therefore, the elderly will represent an increasing presence in the United States.

Butler (1975) says, "We view aging as little more than decline with no redeeming personal or social value. Old age has become an absurdity, a time of life with virtually

nothing to recommend it” (p. 402). He coined the term ageism in 1968 with colleague Alex Comfort and defined it as a process of systematic stereotyping and prejudice against those who are old. This practice results in negative attitudes toward older adults ranging from pity and infantilism to avoidance and even hostility. There are a few defined expectations of what older people should do as they age which can lead to negative stereotypes. Ageism is a form of prejudice like racism or sexism; however, ageism differs in that we will all encounter this systematic prejudice should we live long enough (Laws, 1995). Ageism creates tension and dissension between generations. Our immediate perception of whether someone is young or old comes from the person’s visual appearance. Thus, popular or prevalent visual images in our culture affect millions and can promote ageism.

Schoenfield (1982) looked at the origin of stereotypes and how they operate. He contends that the negative attitude popularized against the elderly may not be as absolute as we think. He examines exceptions. For instance, of the 65 percent of the students who believe older people are inflexible, 27 percent or almost half, believe there are exceptions to their inflexibility. Schoenfield claims this drastically changes the weight of a stereotype. A body of research in this area has not been able to answer the issue conclusively (Kogan, 1979; Hummert, Shaner, & Gartska, 1995; McTavish, 1971; Palmore, 1971).

Defining Age Becomes Confusing

Seniors have become a hot topic in research, and yet, defining age can become difficult. Some of the confusion stems from how one uses and defines the term seniors.

Financial organizations, major corporations and a handful of national magazines target seniors as the 50-plus market that represents 26.1 percent of the population (U.S. Statistical Abstract, 1997). Others use the Older Americans Act of 1965 designating age 60 as the entrance to senior status. Many groups still hold to the traditional retirement age of 65 established by Social Security to label seniors. This 15-year age spread accounts for different results in scholarly research and commercial marketing studies. In addition whether a study examines news content or advertising; mass media or niche media, each approach may influence the findings.

Coding can be confusing because actual age is often difficult to determine. Coders may vary in judgment according to their own age and personal bias. Langmeyer (1984) discovered in an experimental research project that the young coders who chose the advertisements to be viewed by respondents all thought the Gallo wine spokesperson was definitely over age 65. When the respondents (adults age 60 and over) were interviewed, only 26 of the 50 senior respondents in the experimental project agreed that the spokesperson was over age 65. These same discrepancies appear in television studies where Peterson (1973) found the elderly well represented in television at 12.96 percent versus Aronoff (1974) who found only 4.9 percent of the prime-time television characters to be elderly.

Magazines serving niche markets create further complications. Many of the print studies look at magazines that target the 35-to-40-year-old reader. Consequently, one would assume the publishers give little thought to addressing anyone over age 65. For example, Bramlett-Soloman and Wilson (1989) looked at aging and minorities in *Life* and *Ebony*. They found both magazines low in using models over age 65; that is 1.8 percent

for *Life* with an average age reader of 41 years old, and 1.7 percent for *Ebony* with an average age reader of 36 years old. *Ebony* presented four times as many age-bias ads as did *Life*. Even larger studies using multiple titles found mixed results all well under the census figures. Gantz, Gartenberg and Rainbow (1980) found low elderly representation at 5.9 percent, whereas Langmeyer (1993) found 7.1 percent, Ursic, Ursic and Ursic (1986) found 9 percent and Kvasnicka, Beymer and Peerloff (1982) found 8 percent. In addition, Kvasnicka et al. (1982) reported a whopping 77.2 percent of the elderly portrayed in the mature market magazines, and Langmeyer (1993) revealed 47 percent in *Modern Maturity* which is similar to other studies on *Modern Maturity* (Baker & Goggin, 1994; Roberts & Zhou, 1997). Obviously the bias runs both ways, and coding has a strong influence on the results.

Under-Representation Reveals a Consensus

Within the disciplines of gerontology, communication, and marketing, there is an ongoing discussion as to whether the media accurately portrays the older population. One thing is clear: overall representation of the elderly is low in general consumer magazines which leads scholars to suggest the elderly are non-existent in our society and unimportant. This under-representation in the 1970s and 1980s studies is documented in a literature review across print and broadcast, both in news and advertising, by Vasil and Wass (1993). Recent studies continue to document under-representation of the elderly in general consumer magazines and over-representation in the mature market titles (Baker & Goggin, 1994; Langmeyer, 1993; Peterson, 1992 ; Roberts & Zhou, 1997). Over-representation in *Modern Maturity* is understandable since the publication is directed

only to members of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), who are all over age 50. On the other hand, general consumer magazines are read by all ages and typically carry under-representation of older adults even though the magazine may have as much as 23 percent elderly readership as with *Reader's Digest*. Scholars fear this under-representation causes a gap in reality. Both the young and the elderly who may be heavily dependent on media and removed from everyday interaction with society suffer most from this gap (Gerbner, Gross, Signorelli, & Morgan, 1980; Hess, 1974; Hiemstra, Goodman, Middlemiss, Vosco, & Ziegler, 1983; Kvasnicka et al., 1982; Passuth & Cook, 1985; Peterson, 1992; Schramm, 1969)

The preponderance of studies in print and broadcast agree that older women still remain virtually invisible (Aronoff, 1974; Baker & Goggin, 1994; Francher, 1973; Gantz et al., 1980; Greenberg, Korzenny, & Atkin, 1979; Kvasnicka et al., 1982; Langmeyer, 1993; Peterson, 1973; Robinson, 1995; Ursic et al., 1986). For example, Hollenshead and Ingersoll (1982) cited a low portrayal of older women in magazines, especially in advertising, with less than 1 percent representation in 1967 ads, and ten years later, 1.4 percent representation in 1977 ads. England, Kuhn and Gardner (1981) examined magazines over 20 years and found an average age of 27 for women and 35 for men. A low portrayal of older women “is evidence that advertisements reflect and help perpetuate ageism and a sexist double standard of aging which are present in our culture” (p. 471). Thorson (1995) discusses the double standard of aging and cites several scholars work; Bell (1970) claims women age sooner than men in this culture considering they are primarily valued for their physical appearance and sexuality; Seccombe and Ishii-Kuntz

(1991) report respondents from the Harris Poll on Aging in 1981 reveal a consensus that men age between 60 and 64 while women age earlier between 55 and 59 years.

The culturally appropriate appearance for aging women evolved from the 1950s mature figure in mature fashions to an obsession with youth in the 1960s and 1970s. Finally, the 1980s ignored the biological realities of aging by advocating a slim youthfulness with anything less as obvious self-indulgence and irresponsibility. A study of all articles on Jane Fonda and Barbara Bush in women's magazines since 1977 showed Fonda is praised for conforming to cultural ideals, and yet, Bush is treated with an ambivalent attitude suggesting disapproval of those who don't comply with cultural appearance norms (Dinnerstein & Weitz, 1994). Cultural standards promote women's use of expensive, time-consuming techniques to avoid aging. Goodman (1994) explored social and psychological factors in women's receptivity to cosmetic surgery and reports developmental factors rather than social role models drove these women to surgically alter their bodies. However, the author's overriding concern is the homogenous view of "what is beautiful" held by all women interviewed. Goodman suggests this view is derived from mass media and our culture. The non-surgery women are apparently more vulnerable to society's bias against aging women than those who elected to have surgery.

Portrayals Remain Mixed

Beyond under-representation, the literature vacillates with the positive and negative stereotypes presented in the media. Gerbner et al. (1980), the largest study with 16,688 characters, found a low representation of the elderly on television: 2.3 percent, with more women than men being portrayed as unsuccessful, eccentric, silly and lacking

common sense. Women were portrayed as sexually neutral while men were portrayed as sexually attractive. This study was considered most reliable due to its size (Vasil & Wass, 1993). Similar mixed portrayals of the elderly were found in television studies (Aronoff, 1974; Bell, 1992; Peterson, 1973; Francher, 1973; Robinson, 1995). Print studies reveal much the same. Ursic et al. (1986) discovered the elderly portrayed in somewhat prestigious work situations through magazine advertising in nine titles. Kvasnicka et al. (1982) reported that the elderly are seen most often in ads for chair-lift products, drugs, food or beauty aids in both general audience and mature market titles. Surprisingly, Langmeyer (1993) found a greater incidence of positive to negative portrayals in general audience magazines at a 7 to 1 ratio than in *Modern Maturity* at 4.5 to 1 ratio.

Conventional wisdom dictates that the mature market titles would produce more positive images since their goal is to value aging. Over 30 years examination of *Modern Maturity* showed adults age 50 through 64 increased in higher status occupations while those over age 65 were relegated to home settings rather than business settings. Sedentary portrayals of this oldest group also increased (Roberts & Zhou, 1997). The authors suggest these portrayals reflect a shift in the American way of life in recent years where older adults turn their homes into a nest and retreat from a busy world.

Whitmore (1995) points out that the wide-range of research and complicated nature of advertising makes it difficult to answer the questions of age bias in advertising. He claims print advertising studies fall into two camps: the marketing field and the gerontology discipline. Advertising and trade journals tout the wealth and vigor of the mature market while gerontology and media journals dwell on age bias and the exclusion of older adults in advertising. Much depends on which camp you are from and how you

define seniors. Recent studies identify some improvement. Magazine advertising has changed since the late 1960s to include more social responsibility issues including ecology, health and safety, consumerism, equal opportunity for women and minorities and public education (Lill, Gross, & Peterson, 1986). Business and marketing researchers look beyond the lucrative 55+ market and critically examine how the elderly are portrayed (Baker & Goggin, 1994; Langmeyer, 1993; Peterson, 1992; Roberts & Zhou, 1997).

If a goal of *Modern Maturity* is indeed 'to improve the image of aging', and if this publication wishes to continue to be the most influential advocacy magazine for all older Americans, it must make a conscious effort to attract non-white readers as well as advertisements that use non-white characters (Roberts & Zhou , 1997 , p. 218).

Visual Impact Does Not Belong to Advertising Alone

Most print magazine studies have examined advertising images because the visual images are pervasive and influential. The basis of using visuals in advertising is to attract attention and influence perceptions. However, visual images do not belong to advertising alone. They reside in news and features as well, and a reader doesn't necessarily distinguish between the two departments when paging through a periodical.

Two print studies looked at editorial content and aging and discuss the need for more work with news photographs and the portrayal of aging. Kent and Shaw (1980) looked at references to age in the text of *Time* magazine and found little age stereotyping except for young athletes who are often referred to as "growing old." They also note that

women are labeled with age descriptions more often than men. The authors suggest future studies should examine age reference in photographs. However, Kent and Shaw admit approximate age is difficult to determine and the interaction with textual materials makes it more complex.

A second study reviewed age reference in Marriage and Family textbooks, both photographs and text (Stolley & Hill, 1996). They report 8.8 percent of the photographs contained an elderly person. However, the authors were more impressed that these photographs were disbursed throughout the textbooks instead of just in the chapters on the elderly. This signifies a positive trend to treat the elderly as a natural part of the life span. The trend was not reflected in the text that gave little to no reference of the elderly outside of a few specific chapters. Minorities remain grossly under-represented. Two-thirds of the elderly photos portray women in leisure activities, romantic situations or family gatherings. This also differs from magazine advertising studies that consistently report women as under-represented with a sexist, double-age bias. Expectedly, educational references provide the first place to more accurately portray society in order to effect cultural changes.

Looking at news copy and photographs together in textbooks may be ideal, however it is not the only way to study portrayals. Considering their nature, magazines lend themselves to the study of photographs alone. Readers often page through an entire issue before they choose what stories to actually read. During the browsing phase, visual images dominate and demand the readers' attention whether they are news, features or advertising. These images initially create those first and often lasting impressions or perceptions.

Business Gropes for Appropriate Images

As the scrutiny of the elderly in media continues, business is beginning to replace the focus on youth with different values in the 1990s advertising. An Omaha World-Herald headline read “Ads Targeting Chunky Boomers” when reporting that Kellogg company will drop their ad campaign of slim models for Special K cereal and replace them with formats to suggest healthy, even chunky, can be beautiful, a return to the fuller mature figure. Likewise, Body Shop, a national bath-and-beauty products chain, proposes ads featuring Ruby, a plastic doll with a Rubenesque size-18 figure (“Ads Targeting”, 1998, February 7, p. 52). Marketing literature on aging shows less emphasis on how to serve this group and more on how to tap into this lucrative market. The industry is out to replace the myths they created in order to attract new business (Sawchuck, 1995). However not all marketing professionals see business as the culprit.

Wolfe claims surveys show a high percentage of older people do not like how they have been depicted in ads. Wolfe paints the elderly as romantically minded, interested in a productive life as well as interaction with others. They want the best price but will not sacrifice value or quality for cost. The 1987 creative “New Kid” for McDonald’s promoted the elderly as both consumer and valued fast-food worker. It has been received better by older adults than Wendy’s 1970 commercial of Clara Peller in the “Where’s the Beef” ad? Wendy’s has since changed their spokesperson to Dave Thomas, senior founder of the company and over age 65. Dave personifies a nice guy and good neighbor here to serve your needs. Likewise, celebrity June Allyson promotes freedom and an active lifestyle as spokesperson for Kimberly Clark’s Depends ad as opposed to

the anatomical diagram Proctor and Gamble uses to advertise the competing product Attends. Proctor and Gamble hangs on to 15 percent of the market share while Kimberly Clark enjoys over 50 percent market share (Wolfe, 1990).

Business has been seriously working at advertising to seniors since the late 1980s, however, some first attempts were not too successful. Heinz's adult baby food product and Affinity shampoo products both bombed given older adults did not want to be singled out. Affinity quickly changed the message to women can be sexy and alluring at any age (Greco, 1989; Milliman & Erffmeyer, 1989-90; Whitmore, 1995; Wolfe, 1987). Senior retirement centers remain slow to learn from these mistakes because ads continue to display "retirement." Del Webb Communities with properties across the country still use images of couples on the golf course living in housing developments restricted to age 55 and above. These ads promptly turn off 95 percent of the market if you subscribe to the results of a 1977 Roper survey that showed only 5 percent of retirees would like to live among people of their own age. Seniors realize life is more than hobbies (Wolfe, 1990). Fox Hill Village, a retirement community in Massachusetts, developed a new series of ads touting the late-life accomplishments of Ben Franklin, Clara Barton, Noah Webster and other American heroes (Speer, 1993).

Segmentation in the Market

Advertisers now look at the mature market as a heterogeneous group instead of a homogeneous age-cohort. They recognize the market's different needs, interests, and lifestyles. Older adults dislike being lumped and labeled into a senior-citizen category.

Whitmore (1995) reports older people are portrayed in diverse and varied images in newspapers supported by the knowledge that the older people get, the more individual they become.

Segmentation is not new. Gerontology profiles are rooted in how people adjust or adapt to aging and are categorized by age segments 55-65, 65-74, 75-84 and 85 plus. Butler (1975) points out, however, before age 85 chronological segmentation is invalid because aging is more a matter of physical, psychological and emotional status. Extensive research in gerontology shows that aging stereotypes of the slow, sick, sexless and senile could describe people in any age bracket, not just those over age 65.

Communication studies typically deal with the elderly as a homogeneous group. One study addresses this deeper view of aging as Butler suggests. The design compares contextual aging [1] with chronological aging and how the elderly view ageism stereotyping (Hofstetter, Schultze, Mahoney, & Buss, 1993). The sample of 593 seniors indicates factors of contextual aging such as health, mobility and life satisfaction significantly relate to perceived stereotyping with the higher the contextual age the more negative the stereotype. These tendencies are more prevalent among men than women. Chronological age does not relate significantly to perceived stereotypes. Similar results are found in a study where shifts in age identification are related to health, activity, and employment status. The stigma of aging stereotypes was felt more by those suffering age-related problems (Ward, 1977).

Marketing studies discuss segmentation and are only beginning to establish empirical evidence. The mature market is divided into age segments with distinct needs and spending patterns so they can be hit with rifle-like precision (Sawchuck, 1995).

Scholars suggest the mature market doesn't think of itself in chronological age but in cognitive age which is about 70 percent of their actual age (Day, Davis, Dove, & French, 1987-1988; Milliman & Erffmeyer, 1989-1990; Wolfe, 1987). Is it any wonder then that research studies find little representation of the elderly when the advertiser is skewing a message meant for a 65-year-old using a 46-year-old-model? Stephens (1991) found the preferred appearance of models with older consumers is about 10 years younger than their chronological age with interests about 15 years younger than their chronological age. The age decade scale was determined to better measure cognitive age than either the single-item measure or the semantic differential measure [2]. Stephens believes cognitive age along with chronological age gives advertisers a richer understanding of the market. It allows them to target the young-at-heart market with travel services and automobiles, and then reach the less active or infirm elderly with goods and services to help them better cope with a negative looking future.

Under-representation of elderly people in ads may not be as much a matter of ageism as risking effectiveness of older models appealing to both older and younger audiences. A survey of 286 executives shows that 86 percent of the executives encouraged advertisers to use older models especially in health products, financial services, insurance and travel. However, both clients and agencies proceed with caution due to the risk of a younger group's alienation from elderly models. This risk stems from clients' attitudes toward using the elderly as central figures (Greco, 1989; Sawchuck, 1995). Attitudes of the young toward the elderly are reflected in many gerontology and sociology studies. Thorson and Perkins (1980-81) claim the most important relationship to attitudes about the elderly is primarily age and not personality or demographic factors.

Sherman and Gold (1979) show young people hold a negative attitude toward the elderly. Collette-Pratt (1976) finds old age devalued by all groups but twice as much by the young as by the old.

The elderly see it differently. Milliman and Effmeyer (1989-90) discovered consumers over age 65 favor models of all three age groups, however, they only experience credibility with the middle age and older models. This dilemma has prompted advertisers to use middle age or older models when targeting the mature market exclusively and younger models when reaching mass audiences. Langmeyer (1984) revealed that seniors approved of their portrayal in advertising. She stated the most profound finding might be that the elderly preferred to see children in advertisements. Greco (1989) writes of sheltered audiences. He offers marketers a product matrix to determine appropriate models when the product use is for mass consumers or by the elderly alone, and to identify whether the audience can be sheltered or not. For mass media ads directed to consumers at large, the intergenerational approach is popular as seen in the McDonald's and Nestle Toll House promotions (Greco, 1989).

Segmentation can also be based on income. The wealth of the elderly has risen substantially. After Medicare, poverty among the elderly dropped from 1 in 3 before 1960 to less than 14 percent in 1970 and still holds there. This compares with 14.7 percent of all Americans who live below the poverty line (Hess, 1990). However, Hess points out the subgroups tell a different story. Seven in ten elderly women have annual incomes under \$10,000 while only 41 percent of the men do. Adults over age 85 are twice as likely to live below the poverty level, and elderly women of color are 60 percent more likely to live in poverty. Marketers do not address the huge disparities of income

found among the elderly, and therefore, only appeal to a small privileged sector with the money to spend. After age 75, the market is ignored given poverty is more likely to be a problem. This group also spends the least of all American households, 56 percent below the national average (Sawchuck, 1995).

Despite these subgroups, middle-class elderly have caught marketers' attention due to discretionary income. Discretionary income, when available among the 32 million Americans age 65 and over, is about \$7,000 annually which is twice that of the Baby Boom generation (Speer, 1993). Discretionary spending by the 60-to-80 age group depends on a "being experience" or a joy of living. This is in direct contrast to the first 40 years of life when discretionary spending relates primarily to possessions (Wolfe, 1987). As marketing becomes more sophisticated and accountable, advertisers will continue to pay attention to discretionary income.

Media Use Relates to Income and Lifestyle

Like their portrayal in the media, older adult's use of mass media seems to be debatable depending on which reports are reviewed. The consensus claims the elderly spend about 50 percent of their time with mass media and use it to satisfy a number of different needs (Nussbaum, Thompson, & Robinson, 1989). Information is desired over pure entertainment. In an overview of mass media and the elderly, Young (1979) concludes that the elderly are subjected to media content designed for children, adolescents and adults under age 65. Whether they build current media choices on past media experiences is in question despite the fact that Dankowski (1975) argues a generation raised with a specific medium will prefer it to any others as they age. Sensory

losses present a problem to this cohort, however, it is one that is overblown. Young confirms that book and magazine reading remain relatively stable for the entire elderly population. Higher income and education dramatically effect their usage. In television, the opposite is true. Low income and education increase television viewing among the elderly (Rahtz, Sirgy, & Meadow, 1989).

According to studies reviewed by Nussbaum et al. (1989) television is most predominant with the elderly and increases with age until it declines around age 70 and thereafter. Newspaper readership increases with age until it drops off at age 70, and magazine readership decreases with age. Magazines become a favored news source with the better-educated and more affluent elderly. Overall the older adults appear to change from medium to medium in relation to sensory changes associated with aging. Television and newspaper usage remains high among the elderly according to current literature. Robinson and Skill (1995) show that reading expenditures among all age groups are highest for the age 55-to-64 cohort. Between 1986 and 1991 when overall reading expenditures dropped, they increased with the 55-to-64-year-old and 75-plus age groups. This could reflect the growing number of elderly in our population, and their disenchantment with major mass media offerings.

Reading ranks high in general population usage studies as well. Spring (1993) found that reading ranks third behind television and socializing in how Americans spend their leisure time. Robinson (1993) used a scale of 0-10 and reported people enjoy interpersonal interaction more than they enjoy watching TV or listening to the radio, but not as much as they enjoy reading magazines or watching a video. Reading magazines ranks fourth as the most enjoyed communication activity. Burnett (1991) looked at

media habits of the affluent elderly and finds older men heavy readers of both newspaper and magazines with interest in news, business, travel and financial matters. Both males and females in this category prefer magazines rather than television. Top magazines used by this group include *Money*, *Forbes*, *New Yorker*, *National Geographic* and *Time*. *Reader's Digest*, *TV Guide*, *Sports Illustrated* and *People* show no difference in affluence among elderly readers.

Researchers continue to segment older adults by lifestyle, personality and even advertising beliefs to determine media use. Day et al. (1987-88) divided their study of elderly women into four segments based on internal and external locus of control that justifies a lifestyle approach much like the VALS scale [3]. News media ranks high across all four groups. Magazines identified among the elderly women include *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Good Housekeeping*, *House and Garden*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *McCall's*, *TV Guide*, *Reader's Digest*, *Women's Day* and *National Geographic*. A second study again segments elderly women by their use and attitudes in regard to advertisements (David & French, 1989). Diverse media usage between television and print reflects very different psychographic profiles with no demographic differences. News media ranks high across all three distinct segments. Moschis (1996) identified four groups among the elderly based on biological and psychological events they have experienced. These groups and their consumer habits are recognized through ten years of empirical research at the Center for Mature Consumer Studies. Over 50 percent of the elderly across all four groups engage in heavy magazine reading which constitutes an hour or more a day. Heavy TV viewing, identified by 3.5 hours or more a day, ranks from 35 percent usage with the Healthy Indulgents to 58 percent usage with the Frail

Recluses. Because the elderly spend over half their leisure time with media and often experience unmet needs, research remains important in the areas of content, usage and effects.

Stereotypes, the Media and Social Reality

So why all the fuss about elderly portrayal and representation in media? A number of studies recognize that the mass media provide one of the most important sources of socialization in our culture (Bleise, 1982; Gerbner et al., 1980; Hess, 1990; Rodin & Langer, 1980; Vasil & Wass, 1993). Advertising as well as editorial images contribute to these portrayals. Hollenshead and Ingersoll (1982) quoted an older union representative's reaction to advertisements: "We are victims of the advertisers. We never see ourselves as potential buyers of anything except cookies, laxatives and false teeth" (p.28). Nussbaum and Robinson (1986) conclude that magazine studies in the 1970s did little to shatter existing stereotypes. Medicine or some remedy for problems associated with aging was stressed in 60 percent of the magazine articles. The elderly were portrayed as cantankerous, slow, sad, senile, stubborn and lonely. Vasil and Wass (1993) point out that over half of the television studies in the 1970s and 1980s portrayed the elderly in a negative light. They also found elderly stereotypes and predominantly negative portrayals in children's literature.

Hess (1974) believes that before the focus on gerontology emerged in the 1970s, the elderly were viewed as a group of unproductive workers, of low intelligence, emotional and financial drags, with lost sexual capacity and dumped in public institutions by uncaring relatives. Actually only 5 percent of the elderly reside in nursing homes and

two-thirds of them are over age 80 with 84 percent unmarried. These figures have not changed from the 1970s to the 1980s (Hess, 1990). A recent study on 30 years of political television advertising with the elderly presents a dichotomy. Over 15 percent of the elderly were shown in nursing homes (Kaid & Garner, 1995). This is not too surprising. After all, political advertising carries a reputation for using scare tactics and exaggerations of reality in order to garner sympathy and votes.

Hess supports Gerbner and other cultivation theorists who believe repeated media portrayals eventually create pseudo social realities, especially for those removed from frequent interaction in society. Long before the Cultivation Theory [4], Walter Lippmann (1922) suggested that the pictures in our heads came from the pictures presented by mass media, whether they are positive or negative portrayals. These negative portrayals can be harmful with the elderly who are heavy users of media and less likely to be involved in groups whose conversations often test the validity of mass media (Powell & Williamson, 1985; Rahtz et al., 1989; Schramm, 1969). Stereotypes are patronizing depicting the elderly as isolated, frail, demented and poor. Often older adults accept these myths created by stereotypes at face value and then their self-image suffers (Thorson, 1995).

On the other hand, Hess (1990) says media portrayals of happy, healthy older adults in retirement communities living it up has influenced the public debate of policymakers to question whether programs for the elderly should be based on age alone or on need to determine eligibility. Butler (1975) agrees the myth of serenity among the elderly is as absurd as the negative stereotypes. Old age is like every other stage of life with its problems, joys, fears and potential. Society needs to look at aging as a natural progression of the life cycle and learn to embrace aging, not alienate it. Producing varied

portrayals of the elderly both negative and positive will better serve all members of society with a realistic view of aging (Langmeyer, 1993; Robinson & Skill, 1995). Beyond this, researchers need to examine the process of communication and how information is presented and received about this age group with little previous history.

Studies on seniors' reactions to media portrayals show interesting and varied results. Negative labels about aging can cause older adults to act in a manner consistent with the stereotype because of society's expectations (Rodin & Langer, 1980). Few positive role models and the increased incidence of significant life changes in the elderly make the stereotype particularly harmful. A review of reports and how they affect interactions with the elderly show this group is mislabeled and avoided often because the elderly appear as a novelty to many young people (Rodin & Langer, 1980). Experimental studies indicate that two factors can influence behavior: changing the environment of the elderly and giving them motivation.

Mares and Cantor (1992) discovered elderly viewers actually benefit from a variety of portrayals including negative stereotypes. They personally surveyed 94 adults average age of 75 and learned that lonely adults prefer negative portrayals of elderly subjects while non-lonely adults prefer positive portrayals of both elderly or young subjects. These findings support social comparison theory. People viewing others in a like situation or worse actually feel better about their selves. The authors caution however that the results indicate people are likely to respond dependent on preoccupations or temporary emotional states rather than absolute feelings. A similar finding was uncovered in the 1974 Louis Harris results of the National Council on Aging survey. Older adults who feel others are worse off than themselves have higher life

satisfaction scores. The negative stereotype proves useful because the idea of the deserving, needy elderly spawns coalitions with the old and elicits sympathy from all age groups to approve and support government programs for the aged (Kearl, 1982).

Disposition patterns emerge in a study where 112 adults over age 60 were interviewed (Korzenny & Neuendorf, 1980). The more the aged watch fantasy content for escape, the more they perceive the elderly portrayed as hindrances to society. Whereas the more the aged watch reality content for information, the more they perceive the elderly to be assets to society and humorous. Only one statistically significant predictor of negative self-concept was evidenced. It relates to the older adults' perception of the aged on television being respectfully treated. This may indicate that the elderly do not feel they get as much respect in reality as the elderly receive on television.

Stereotypes Affect All Age Groups

Media portrayals create social realities that may also influence the younger generation who use media and may have little contact with the elderly. Although three-generation households may never have been typical in the United States, close proximity to relatives and intergenerational contact was common. Now the contact has been lost or greatly reduced due to a mobile society with little time and numerous responsibilities. Fillmer (1982) conducted a study with 341 elementary school children using photographs of both young and old adults. The children used more negative adjectives to describe the older rather than the younger adults. The old men received the most negative responses. Only the girls were willing to associate with both the older and younger adults pictured.

Photographs reinforce the stigma against older adults. Levin (1988) used the same man pictured at age 25, 52, and 73 and tested reactions of almost 400 college students from California, Tennessee and Massachusetts. Great care was taken to prepare the photos with no reference to time periods in clothing, hairstyle and background to lessen any bias. Both males and females negatively evaluated the photograph of the older man in 18 of the 19 variables. The perceptions of generosity did not produce a significant difference in age across the three samples while perceptions of activity, health, attractiveness and memory ranked highest in negativity with older age across all three samples.

Hummert, Garstka and Shaner (1997) also used photographs to reveal that older adults are viewed negatively. Past studies show facial cues including structure, expression, skin condition and hair all form implicit stereotypes. These results showed the participants' age did effect the degree of stereotyping with women seen more negatively after age 70 as compared to men after age 80. After age 80, women returned to a more positive stereotype. This probably reflects our cultural values demanding an idealized commercial beauty in women as they age rather than with men. However once women reach old age, they are accepted by society and generally viewed with affection. A hint of this bias is reflected in the television study that shows women under-represented as compared to men throughout the life span until the oldest cohort is reviewed. Then, women's representations almost double that of the men (Robinson & Skill, 1995).

Stereotypes and attitudes are puzzling because so many factors are involved. Palmore (1971) claims we laugh at what frightens us. Death is man's biggest fear.

Aging becomes a prime target for stereotypes. Palmore summarizes the body of research on ageism and attitudes:

1. There are more negative stereotypes about aging than about the young.
2. More negative stereotypes about aging are held by all people.
3. Most people have mixed feelings about various aspects of aging.
4. Knowledge can improve the myths and misconceptions about aging, however attitudes are difficult to change.

Numerous studies of college students surveyed on attitudes and stereotypes of aging based on the respondents age show the older the student the more positive the attitude (Kogan, 1979; McTavish, 1971; Nussbaum et al., 1989; Thorson & Perkins, 1980). Two studies included education as well and showed that social science majors are more likely to hold positive attitudes than other department majors such as business (Thorson & Perkins, 1980; Yenerall, 1995).

Individuals hold multiple stereotypes of the elderly with more complex stereotype sets for the elderly than for middle age adults or the young. This phenomena prevails due to the range of traits associated with each stereotype and the sheer number of the stereotypes held (Hummert, Garstka, Shaner, & Strahm, 1995). Neither stereotypes or attitudes of the elderly are uniformly negative which make it difficult for communication scholars to always specify a straightforward relationship with the cognitive elements. With the elderly, many of the same stereotypes are held about the group even though they vary at the trait level.

Seven powerful stereotypes are uncovered in a study across the young, middle age, and old respondents: Golden Ager, John Wayne Conservative, Perfect Grandparent,

Shrew/Curmudgeon, Recluse, Despondent and Severely Impaired (Hummert, Garstka, Shaner, & Strahm, 1994). All eleven aging stereotypes were ranked from the youngest, Activist, to the oldest, Severely Impaired. The three youngest stereotypes, Activist, Golden Ager and Perfect Grandparent, prevailed as positive terms across all age groups. The four oldest stereotypes, Vulnerable, Despondent, Mildly Impaired and Severely Impaired, held negative connotations across all age groups. Elderly respondents chose older age ranges to associate with the positive stereotypes while the young and middle-aged participants did not. All respondents chose older age ranges to associate with negative stereotypes. One negative stereotype, Vulnerable, differed significantly with young respondents assigning a much older-age group with the stereotype than did the middle-aged or older respondents (Hummert et al., 1995).

Attitudes remain deep seeded and complex. Doka (1986) conducted an oral history program with 24 adolescents and the elderly to demonstrate increased knowledge about aging and contact with the elderly would produce more favorable attitudes with participants than non-participants. The findings showed no significant differences and may support the individual's grounded attitudes and beliefs about the aging process. Attitudes are not shaped by one or two variables. They are made up of many characteristics and unique experiences of a particular individual. Although the youth anticipated the project and admired the elderly participants, their newly acquired knowledge did not change their attitudes. The experience created anxiety about death, physical and mental decline, loneliness and victimization.

In contrast Murphy-Russell, Die and Walker (1986) conducted experiments with students using three different workshops to change attitudes toward the elderly: a group

discussion on attitudes and aging, an interview with an elderly couple, and a filmstrip dispelling the myths of aging. They conclude that one-hour of social interaction with a broad-minded, congenial elderly couple may be the most effective tactic in changing attitudes. Much more work needs to be done with the young and the elderly to identify predominating factors and their influence in creating perceptions of aging. These perceptions become especially important in our young who will live with a far larger aging population than at any other time in history.

Perception Versus Reality

In 1974, the National Council on Aging contracted with Louis Harris & Associates for a nationwide survey on attitudes toward older people. Interviewing a random sample of 4,254 adults age 18 and over revealed a wide gap between perception and reality. Harris Poll respondents age 18 to 64 view elderly people as "ineffectual, sedentary people whiling away their days in isolation" (Bramlett-Soloman, 1989, p. 188). Actually, respondents age 18-64 and the respondents age 65 and over rarely differed more than 10 percent in agreement on their views of serious problems to the elderly (Kearl, 1982). For five of these problems over half of all respondents from both the young and older adult age groups agree health, enough money, loneliness, fear of crime and not feeling needed were serious problems for the elderly. Actually less than 16 percent admit they had no personal experience with any of these five problems as being serious among the elderly.

Thorson (1995) points out that 74 percent of the younger respondents thought crime was a problem for older adults, and yet, about 25 percent of the nation's older

adults feel crime is a problem. Over 50 percent of the younger respondents thought older adults were in poor health; only 21 percent of the elderly say their health is poor. Sixty-eight percent of the younger respondents thought old people were lonely; actually 13 percent of the older adults feel lonely. Only 17 percent of the elderly admit they have inadequate incomes, whereas 68 percent of the younger respondents thought old people squeezed by on low incomes (Thorson, 1995).

Likewise Ferraro (1982) compared data from both surveys taken in 1974 and 1981 by Louis Harris and Associates for the National Council on Aging. Americans thought the elderly were portrayed more favorable in television than in print. Television portrayals showed older adults were better off than the reality. However, Ferraro found the perception of the status of older adults did not get better between surveys but grew more negative. This persistent negative stereotype embodies the tone of the 1980s filled with government cutbacks which were seen to effect the elderly when actually very few of the cutbacks did effect the elderly. Despite the heterogeneous elderly population, they rallied around two issues, the integrity of Social Security and Medicare programs (Hess, 1990; Coombs, & Holladay, 1995). The AARP helped perpetuate this vulnerable image. These programs not only benefit those over age 65, they also indirectly benefit their adult children who might otherwise be asked to become providers.

This vulnerable image gave way to a new perception in the 1990s which saw the aging as an affluent voting block willing to sacrifice their young, and pitted the generations against each other. In reality, the elderly remain heterogeneous with access to special interest groups but certainly not a united voting block. Almost 15 percent of the elderly still remain below the poverty line, which is the same as the national average.

This has not changed since the 1970s. A recent vote by the AARP to support the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act has caused members to break away and could result in more groups being formed like the United Seniors America (Coombs & Holladay, 1995). In response, some newly formed groups have brought both the interests of the elderly and children together such as Generations United.

Schultz and Fritz (1987) conducted a study to test two different explanations for the Harris Poll results which showed that respondents in the survey consistently perceived the life of the elderly as worse than reality. In order to determine if the cause was media biased (informational) or elderly biased (motivational), they administered 10 different questionnaires to both young adults and older adults. The results confirmed the stronger origin of stereotypes came from the media.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Stereotypes exaggerate the reality of entire groups of people. Exaggerated stereotypes have long been used in advertising and mass media to get a message across quickly and create instant identities. In our sound-bite world, presenting USA Today print formats and entertainment-laden news, stereotypical portrayals have become more a necessity than choice for communication mediums. Add the tradition of predominately commercial media in the United States and the lines often become blurred between advertising and editorial. Both departments' create powerful portrayals through photographs that are rarely separated out by the receiver, and therefore, must be taken into consideration together.

McQuail (1987) claims that mass media play a dominant role in defining social reality. If so, it is critical that periodic reviews ascertain how media defines that reality. The literature review shows that most scholars find under-representation of the elderly, particularly with older women and minorities, in mass media research (Baker & Goggin, 1994; Robert & Zhou, 1997; Robinson & Skill, 1995; Vasil & Wass, 1993). The communication and gerontology scholars conclude this means the elderly are undervalued in our society (Butler, 1975; England et al., 1981; Gerbner et al., 1980; Hess, 1974). On the other hand, marketing professionals claim advertisers use younger models to avoid alienating younger consumers (Greco, 1989; Sawchuck, 1995). Cognitive age plays a role in advertising as well, where older consumers think of themselves as 10 to 15 years younger than their chronological age (Greco, 1989; Stephens, 1991; Wolfe, 1987). The portrayal of the elderly continues to remain mixed and reveals both positive and negative stereotypes with the trend moving from a negative view in the 1970s toward a more positive view in the media of the 1980s (Hess, 1990; Langmeyer, 1993; Robinson & Skill, 1995).

Mass media also plays a vital role in linking older adults to the larger society. Because of loneliness and progressive disengagement, older adults turn to mass media for their information about the outside world (Hess, 1974; Powell, 1985; Schramm, 1969). Several studies show they are dissatisfied with media offerings (Bleise, 1982; Young, 1979) and will turn to other forms of leisure such as the telephone to compensate for their dissatisfaction (Bleise, 1982). And yet, do the media respond? Whitmore (1995) stated that portrayals of the elderly in the *Omaha World Herald* improved from 1982 to 1992, and yet, elderly portrayals remained unchanged in *The New York Times*. Elderly issues

were still not addressed in either newspaper after numerous scholars pointed out this lack of coverage in media (Buchholz & Bynum, 1982; Nussbaum et al., 1989). Hilt (1997) discovered that although broadcast managers thought positively about the elderly they did virtually nothing about developing a plan to bring this group information on the top 10 issues: housing, health, transportation, retirement, crime, employment, income and demographic changes in the United States. This shows little more than lip service.

Because stereotypes are exaggerations and mass media portrayals contribute to our social reality, it is important to continue looking at these portrayals in all forms of media. Although several studies were published in the 1990s on magazine print advertising, none of the actual magazine content after 1991 has been examined (Baker & Goggin, 1994; Langmeyer, 1993; Peterson, 1992; Roberts & Zhou, 1997). Langmeyer (1993) encourages five-year periodic examinations of the elderly in the media be done to track any changes and the current reflected social reality. Mass media portrayals do not exist in a vacuum, and Langmeyer calls for a substantial research agenda in this area to encompass studies of both effects and content in the context of other influences.

The wide-range of research on mass media and the aged as well as the complicated nature of advertising makes it difficult to answer the questions of age bias. This study looks at aging portrayals through the examination of older adults in photographs of four broad-based magazines with substantial circulation. The methodology is based on a careful review of past print studies concerning mass media and aging, and incorporates those factors deemed most valuable. Because the reader rarely distinguishes between news/feature and advertising photographs, the study differs in that it will look at all photographs in the magazines. People used in news/feature

photographs and advertisements create a powerful perception of our social reality and the status of any one particular group including the elderly. The methodology will look beyond simple representation and incorporate the use of image, activity/theme and topic/product ratings to describe portrayals (Gantz et al., 1980; Langmeyer, 1993; Ursic et al., 1986; Roberts & Zhou, 1997; Stolley & Hill, 1996).

Chapter 3

Learning More About the Portrayal of the Elderly

Objectives

The present study does not propose to offer a complete depiction of growing old in our society, nor does it provide an exhaustive understanding of the relationship between older adult portrayals in magazines and the attitudes they influence. Instead, the study intends to add to the body of research on the topic in a meaningful way through analyzing all photographs of the elderly in a current sample. If mass media does fill in the gaps of how we learn about the world around us and if misrepresentations do exist, then we must continue to examine the content and how our culture is reflected in the media.

Hypotheses

In an attempt to add to the body of research on representation and portrayal of older adults in magazines, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1. Photographs containing older adults in both news/feature and advertising formats will be under-represented in general consumer magazines.

Scholars claim under-representation in past research suggests the elderly in America are undervalued.

H2. Photographs containing older adults in both news/feature and advertising formats will portray a positive image more often than a negative image in general consumer magazines.

The elderly continue to gain status over the negative portrayals of the 1970s through positive portrayals.

H3. Photographs containing older women in both news/feature and advertising formats will be under-represented in general consumer magazines.

Women continue to suffer from a double standard on aging.

Methodology

A content analysis is used for this study. Content analysis treats the unit of analysis, in this case the photograph used either in news/feature or advertising formats, as the message rather than the sender or the receiver of the message (Kassarjian, 1977). Content analysis has been used extensively in media studies across all age groups.

Magazines chosen for this study were selected to represent a broad interest range and large national circulation. They were also selected considering their use in previous studies. According to Mediamark Research, the four magazines: *Reader's Digest*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Time*, and *Sports Illustrated* reach almost 30 million Americans. *Reader's Digest* and *Ladies Home Journal*, both monthlies, rank in the top seven largest circulation magazines of the country. *Reader's Digest* represents the general interest audience and *Ladies Home Journal*, the women's audience. *Time* and *Sports Illustrated*, both weeklies, represent the categories of news and sports. All four magazines selected for the study were also examined in the Gantz study. Gantz et al. (1977) have been cited

in other studies for both their results and their criteria in identifying age (Baker & Gogin, 1994; Bramlett-Soloman & Wilson, 1989; Kvasnicka et al., 1982; Langmeyer, 1993).

Reader's Digest and *Time* are read by an equal number of men and women with an average age of 47 and 43 respectively. *Reader's Digest*, a socially and politically conservative general interest magazine, has been published for over 65 years. Twenty-three percent of the readership is over age 65. *Time*, one of the three major news weeklies in the country, carries 14 percent of the readership over age 65 although the publisher claims new attempts to attract a younger audience. Frequently, all three major news weeklies choose the same topic for their cover story. *Ladies Home Journal*, published by Meredith Corporation, reports a ratio of readers at 3.3 women to less than one man (.25) with an average age of 48 years. Recently the magazine underwent a facelift focusing on celebrity covers and moving its content more to news and issues. Geared to predominantly white females, efforts have been made to reflect minorities in photographs and advertising. *Ladies Home Journal* claims 22 percent of their readers are over age 65. *Sports Illustrated's* average age is a bit younger; 37, however it supplies a predominately male circulation with a ratio of 6 men to every 1 woman reader and is read by both older and younger males. *Sports Illustrated* will balance out the female predominance in *Ladies Home Journal*. About 7 percent of *Sports Illustrated* readership is over age 65. The title covers mainstream sports (Katz & Sternberg, 1997; Mediamark Research, 1998).

Random issues selected from the last eighteen months, January 1997 to August 1998, make up the sample. Six issues of each monthly magazine and nine issues of the weeklies were selected randomly from the 1997-98 stock based on past magazine studies

(England et al., 1981; Hollenshead & Ingersoll, 1982; Langmeyer, 1993; Ursic et al., 1986). Advertising series for specific companies or products are often repeated, and therefore reviewing every issue adds little to the final results. Because news or feature photographs have not been examined in magazines before, this portion of the study will reveal any differences between news/feature photographs and advertisements in representation and portrayals of the elderly. Hopefully it will determine the need for further study as well. In this respect, random selection should create an adequate sample.

All photographs containing people were identified and counted for sample selection. A one-third-page format was used unless a smaller photograph clearly showed identifying characteristics to determine age. Photographs with large groups of people (10 or more) where no face was predominant were omitted. In photos containing groups when predominant faces existed, only those faces were coded. This strategy provides the basis for comparing photographs and the number of younger adults and older adults identified to determine representation. Any photographs containing both younger and older people were noted in both age 65 and over and under 65 categories, specifying the number of people identified. The one-third-page format was chosen based on a general acceptance of page dominance, and previous researchers concluding smaller sizes did not significantly alter the quality of the result (Langmeyer, 1983). This practice insures the photographs are large enough to see the human subject and make sound judgments about age. Past aging studies have used everything from advertisements of all sizes, containing humans as well as caricatures, to only full pages of mature adults. This inconsistency may have influenced the wide range of findings in the literature.

Definition of Terms

The chosen photographs were then analyzed independently by two coders and in accordance to the three hypotheses. After a training session to help identify age using the elderly criteria established by Gantz et al. (1980), and a discussion of the image, activity/theme and topic/product categories, a trial test was conducted to determine inter-coder reliability. Elderly were identified using Gantz's criteria of direct mention of age 65 or over alone, or evaluating the following criteria in relation to each other: extensive wrinkles, extensive gray hair, use of ambulatory aids, grandparent references or retirement references.

In addition, given the difficulty in determining between age 50 and 65, it was decided to code everyone with white hair as age 65 and over unless they clearly had the skin and other features of a 30-to-40 year-old. The liberal bias closed the gap between inter-coder reliability, and it was agreed the bias would compensate for all those over age 65 who may dye their hair. Another exception was made for celebrities who were well known, and their age was generally understood. They were coded by age rather than physical appearance. For instance Barbara Walters, widely known to be over age 65, looks very glamorous and does not specifically meet Gantz's criteria on aging. Likewise, President Clinton is generally known to be in his 50s despite the fact his hair is white. Both Clinton and Walters were coded in the study by age rather than their physical appearance.

While these criteria are not an absolute guarantee of determining age, especially with current societal trends to glamorize aging or with adults taking early retirement,

Gantz's criteria has served as a guide for coding in a number of previous studies (Baker & Goggin, 1994; Bramlett-Soloman & Wilson, 1989; Langmeyer, 1993; Kvasnicka et al., 1982). Inter-coder reliability ranged from 82 percent to 100 percent per magazine with most issues ranking in the mid-90 percentile. Kassarian (1977) suggests a minimum of .80 to be effective.

Recent studies have cited that segmenting over age 65 rather than lumping it all together as the 55+ market is beneficial and more informative because characters and models age 65 and over are portrayed differently than those age 55 to 64 (Robinson & Skill, 1995; Roberts & Zhou, 1997). Questions one and two on the coding sheet determine representation of the elderly by comparing photographs of people under age 65 to age 65 and over, and answer hypothesis one.

Once the photographs containing the elderly were selected, coders then identified whether the photographs were advertisements or news/feature formats (question three) in order to determine if aging figures are represented more often in news/feature photographs or advertisements. Coders used questions four and five to determine gender and answer hypothesis three. The remaining questions addressed portrayal and answered hypothesis two. Image referred to whether the photograph projects an overall positive or negative image. Value pairs were used as a guide to select a positive or negative rating: competent versus incompetent, attractive versus unattractive, warm versus distant, pleasure versus pain, relaxed versus worried, acceptance versus an avoidance of aging (Hollenshead & Ingersoll, 1982).

The next section identified predominant themes or activities shown in each photograph with the six different selections being mutually exclusive (Shepherd-Stolley

& Hill, 1996). Activity ratings cover “Leisure” such as vacation or non-working activity, and “Romance” which pertains to a couple dancing, dining, or relaxing on a cruise, and any touching of a caring nature. “Family” relates to an elderly person pictured with implied immediate family members, intergenerational family members or siblings. “Working” includes work or volunteer related activity. “Life enhancing/receiving care” encompasses photographs that show primarily medical procedures such as facelifts and advertisements that range from promoting eyeglasses to adult diapers. “Other” will include any remaining themes or activities. First perceptions of the predominant theme in a photograph determined the selection.

The last section identified eight news/feature topics or advertiser products including “Retirement”, “Medical” (drugs or equipment), “Vacation or Leisure” (anything non-working), “Personal Hygiene or Beauty “ (makeup versus facelifts), “Insurance/Financial” (insurance, investments and wills), “Clothing”, “Food/Household” and “Other”. The product methodology has been used in past advertising studies with the elderly to further depict the portrayal of elderly as positive or negative (Baker & Goggin, 1994; Gantz et al., 1980; Hollenshead & Ingersoll, 1982; Kvasnicka et al., 1982; Roberts & Zhou, 1997; Ursic et al., 1986). Again the most predominant topic or product found in each photograph was recorded.

Analysis of the Data

Advertisements and news or feature photographs where the judges did not agree were resolved through discussion, and findings for each magazine were recorded.

Analysis included frequency distribution to show representation between people under age 65 to people age 65 and over in general consumer magazines. The remaining data addressed only photographs containing adults age 65 and over. This data was entered into a master computer file where the findings were analyzed using prevailing statistical methods. Frequency distribution and Crosstab comparison in the categories of news/feature photographs or advertisements, gender, image, theme and topic/product were examined. Chi Square tests were used to calculate the differences in means.

Chapter 4

Positive Image Remains; Representation Is Mixed

Results

The elderly continue to enjoy a small but positive portrayal in consumer magazines during the 1990s. The images found in news or feature photographs and advertisements in the 1997 and 1998 issues of the four consumer magazines show diverse representation among individual titles and an overall positive image for older adults.

Magazines as well as other forms of mainstream media have been criticized for under-representation of the elderly since the 1970s. The goal of this study was to examine four large circulation consumer magazines looking at both news/feature photographs and advertisements to determine if the criticism is justified, and whether looking at people depicted in all photographs of a particular media makes a difference.

Using the methodology outlined in chapter three, a sample of 30 issues was randomly selected from January 1997 to August 1998 across four titles: *Reader's Digest*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Time* and *Sports Illustrated*. A total of 1,719 photographs were coded for representation of adults age 65 and over and under age 65. The 212 photographs containing older adults were further categorized as to whether they were from an advertisement or news/feature format, whether they contained men or women, and whether they portrayed a positive or negative image in order to answer the hypotheses posed.

Hypothesis 1: Photographs containing older adults in both news/feature and advertising formats will be under-represented in general consumer magazines.

Table 1:
Distribution of 1,719 Photographs in Sample

<i>Reader's Digest</i>		<i>LHJ</i>		<i>Time</i>		<i>Sports Illstd</i>	
Total #	Over 65	Total #	Over 65	Total #	Over 65	Total #	Over 65
355	58	437	32	435	99	492	23
16.3%		7.3%		22.7%		4.6%	

Total Representation of 212 photographs containing elderly equals 12.3 percent.

Hypothesis one was confirmed by only four tenths of a percent. Americans age 65 and over represent 12.7 percent of the U.S. population (U.S. Statistical Abstract, 1997).

However, individual titles varied widely in their representation of the elderly. This is somewhat expected considering the nature of magazines and their targeted audiences.

Hypothesis 2: Photographs containing older adults in both news/feature and advertising formats will portray a positive image more often than a negative image in general consumer magazines.

Table 2:
Frequency of Role Portrayal in 212 Photographs in Sample

<i>Reader's Digest</i>		<i>LHJ</i>		<i>Time</i>		<i>Sports Illstd</i>	
Pos.	Neg.	Pos.	Neg.	Pos.	Neg.	Pos.	Neg.
98.3%	1.7%	84.4%	15.6%	93.9%	6.1%	95.7%	4.3%

Total Portrayal of 212 photographs containing elderly shows 93.9 percent positive.

Hypothesis two was confirmed across all titles as well as collectively. The elderly continue to hold their positive image in general consumer media.

H3. Photographs containing older women in both news/feature and advertising formats will be under-represented in general consumer magazines.

Table 3:

Distribution of Older Women in 212 Photographs in Sample

<i>Reader's Digest</i>		<i>LHJ</i>		<i>Time</i>		<i>Sports Illstd</i>	
<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
53.4%	46.6%	9.4%	90.6%	69.7%	30.3%	82.6%	17.4%
<u>Total Representation of Women over 65 in 212 photographs shows 42.4 percent.</u>							

Hypothesis three was confirmed with collective under-representation of 42.4 percent.

Women over age 65 were under-represented in all titles except *Ladies Home Journal* where they were overwhelmingly over-represented.

Discussion

Clearly the representation of photographs containing the older adults accurately reflects the groups' distribution statistically in society comparing the findings of 12.3 percent elderly representation in general consumer magazines and the statistical 12.7 percent elderly representation in the population (U.S. Statistical Abstract (1997)). However, comparing the number of people found in those photographs age 65 and over to those under age 65 shows under-representation still exists. Past studies have not been consistent in that some findings report only the number of people coded and others report both the total number of people and the number of advertisements. Percent of advertisements containing the elderly are generally cited in the literature rather than

percent of people found. Table 4 illustrates that the comparison of people found in the two age groups leaves the elderly under-represented at 8.8 percent versus the census at 12.7 percent.

TABLE 4:
Distribution of 3,351 People in Sample Photographs

<i>Reader's Digest</i>		<i>LHJ</i>		<i>Time</i>		<i>Sports Illstd</i>	
Under 65	Over 65	Under 65	Over 65	Under 65	Over 65	Under 65	Over 65
637	75	719	40	757	129	966	28
11.8%		5.6%		12.9%		2.8%	

Total Representation of 3,351 people over age 65 equals 8.8 percent.

As with the total number of photographs, the representation of people varies widely by title with *Sports Illustrated* showing the least representation of elderly and *Time* reflecting numbers congruent with the population statistics. Analysis also reveal that when individuals age 65 and over are depicted, it is generally a photograph of only two people and rarely more than three. Younger adults are shown in photographs ranging from one person to ten people. Many photographs contain three to six younger adults. In the whole sample of 271 elderly individuals, there are no photographs with older women containing more than two people and 73 percent of the photographs with older men contain only two people. Over half of the observations coded, 62 percent, show the photograph contained both a younger and an older person. Despite the fact there were few older people overall in the photographs, the intergenerational findings imply a

healthy attitude toward the elderly as active, vital members of our society. Bramlett-Soloman and Wilson (1989) found similar results in advertising studies with 66.3 percent of the photographs containing an older and younger person, as well as Gantz et al. (1977) who reported 73.3 percent containing both older and younger adults.

Individual titles span a wide range of results in the number of photographs that does not necessarily coordinate with the magazine's readership. *Reader's Digest* and *Time* virtually cross parallel their readership over age 65 and actual representation of the elderly in visual images as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Parallel Comparison of Readership and Representation of Elderly		
	Readership over age 65	Photographs of over age 65
<i>Reader's Digest</i>	23%	16.3%
<i>Time</i>	17%	22.7%

In Table 6, *Sports Illustrated* shows lower representation in visual images of adults over age 65 than their elderly readership, however, *Ladies Home Journal* records a blatant under-representation of the elderly.

Table 6: Elderly Readership and Low Representation Comparison		
	Readership over age 65	Photographs of over age 65
<i>Sports Illustrated</i>	7%	4.6%
<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>	22%	7.3%

Raw data comparisons across magazines can be misleading due to the wide variation across titles in the number of advertisements and people represented, partly a

Coding both news/feature photographs and advertisements can skew the results in representation if looking at the total comparison in Table 7, 66 percent news to 34 percent advertising. However when examining the individual publications, all but *Time* are evenly divided between the two categories which would indicate less influence than first suspected. If subscribing to the theory that visual images impact us whether they be news, feature or advertisement, then including both formats makes the most sense in describing how a segment of the population is portrayed. News/feature photographs create a broader and wider portrayal in aging as described later in the findings of *Time*.

Looking at other comparisons between news/feature photographs and advertisements containing the elderly show they mirror the findings reported for all photographs except for women's representation in advertisements. Table 8 illustrates that when breaking out advertisements with news, photographs containing greater numbers of older women are used in advertisements than with older men.

Table 8: <u>Gender and Image comparison of News/Feature or Advertising Photographs</u>			
	Men	Women	Positive Image
Advertisements	44.4%	55.6%	93.1%
News/Feature	64.3%	34.6%	95.0%

This is a trend that has been changing from earlier media studies where women were consistently under-represented (England et al., 1981; Gantz et al., 1977; Ursic et al., 1986). A few recent media studies have found mixed results with the gap narrowing between men and women's representation (Roberts & Zhou, 1997) and others still finding low representation (Baker & Goggin, 1994).

Women in this study would continue to be under-represented if comparing older women to younger women rather than the comparison of older women and older men found in advertisements. In the elderly comparison of Table 8, the women still remain under-represented in the news/feature category as compared to men which is probably as much a function of the older women's role in the workplace or public life as a double standard. This factor will most likely change as women continue to enter the workforce and public life.

In order to run Chi Square tests on gender relationships and image comparisons, the photographs were collapsed into three categories: photographs with only older men, photographs with only older women, and photographs containing both men and women age 65 and over. Results show a significantly larger number of men being pictured overall than women, $\chi^2(6, N = 212) = 54.18, p < .000$. Less than 25 percent of the photographs picture older women. Only 17 percent of the photographs contain both men and women age 65 and over. Image between the men and women show no statistical significance in all photographs coded, however when considering only advertisements the women are shown more negatively, $\chi^2(2, N = 72) = 6.115, p < .047$. *Ladies Home Journal* is found statistically more negative than the other titles at $\chi^2(3, N = 72) = 8.625, p < .035$, thus supporting a double standard. Of the 7.3 percent of all photographs containing older adults in *Ladies Home Journal*, 90.6 percent show older women.

Ladies Home Journal double standard is reinforced in the perceptions formed while paging through large spreads of beautiful young models to discover the photographs of older women are much smaller and very sparse. In fact, one would pause when seeing any older person to determine if they were over age 65, only to discover the

person was around age 50. The gap between women in their 20s and those in their 50s was prevalent. Any older images were so rare among all the young faces, they were considered a novelty. England et al. (1981) report similar finding with over 62 percent of the people in five national magazines reviewed from 1960 to 1979 coded under the age of 30. Only 4 percent were coded as age 40 or more and less than 2 percent were identified to be at least age 60. Two of the five magazines reviewed are included in the current study, *Ladies Home Journal* and *Time*.

Some scholars have claimed it is better to segment adults between age 50 and age 65 in media studies because they are portrayed differently (Robinson & Skill, 1995; Roberts & Zhou, 1997). While that may be the case in television or newspapers, different portrayals among older age segments is not evidenced here. Models in their 50s and 60s are both seen most often to promote Ensure, Depends, vitamins, wrinkle creams, arthritis creams and drugs for impotence. The double standard continues with women pictured more negatively than men are pictured in ads to avoid or cope with aging. GNC, a general nutrition manufacturer, pictures two women running, one younger and one over 65, with the headline: "You're 5'5" now. Will you be 5'5" when you are 80?" (See Figure 1) The ad goes on to say, "If you looked into a crystal ball, what would you see? ...a fragile little old lady, desperately looking for a merit-badge-seeing scout?" Serenity, a bladder-control product, shows a good looking, sophisticated grandmother playing on the floor with her granddaughter (See Figure 2). Renova, a wrinkle cream, runs the headline "Keep the Character. Beat the Wrinkles" with models in their 40s or 50s (See Figure 3). While this photo was not coded as over age 65 in the study, it is included to show how early women are socialized that aging is unacceptable. Other Renova

advertisements did contain women over age 65. The threat does not belong with advertising alone. One news feature in *Ladies Home Journal* pictures a 44 year-old woman and describes about how much a facelift has improved her life.

In fairness, *Ladies Home Journal* depicts aging with a positive slant as well. In news/feature photographs, *Ladies Home Journal* carries pictures of famous older women such as Mother Theresa, Barbara Walters, and Della Reese. Ordinary women are featured as well including the family physician with a long-time practice in New York or the mother-in-law who contradicts all those stereotypical stories of in-laws. The positive aspects are there, but they are sparse amid all the focus on youth, beauty, and the avoidance of age.

Portrayal involves more than just attaching a positive or negative label to fully understand. The intergenerational aspect revealed in over 62 percent of the coded photographs containing an older person supports a positive portrayal and suggests a healthy attitude about aging. Magazines running a majority of the photographs containing elderly that show both a younger and older person is contrary to Disengagement Theory, a theory that is based on the elderly withdrawing from society. It also does not reflect or support a popular viewpoint that members of society want to disassociate with older people.

Time magazine offers another positive scenario. Because of the news focus in *Time* and the majority of the photographs coded in the magazine as news/feature (82.7 percent in Table 7), many images of aging professionals both public and private were found. Celebrities such as Jimmy Stewart, Robert Mitchum, Elizabeth Taylor, Debbie Reynolds and Barbara Walters are featured either working or being remembered for their

contributions to society. World leaders including the Pope, Nelson Mandela, former president George Bush, Queen Elizabeth, and Den Xioping are depicted. A regular feature in each issue, Milestones, presents numerous older faces and touts the accomplishments or recognizes the passing of authors, poets, musicians, scientists, business professionals, and politicians. Often these professions are overlooked as a bountiful resource for people working beyond the popular retirement age of 65.

The feature on the death of Den Xioping in the March 3, 1997 issue of *Time* may have skewed the findings because seven images of the man were recorded in one issue. The basic practice in previous magazine research has been not to code a person twice if shown on the same page, but to allow multiple observations of the same person if they appeared on different pages. Duplicate observations are probably not as much an issue in advertisements. More study is needed concerning news/feature photographs including a direct comparison between younger and older adults.

Time, like *Ladies Home Journal*, includes older images of ordinary people as well: the elderly mother and middle-aged daughter protesting in Atlantic City (See Figure 4), the Civil War widows (See Figure 5), and Montana's mining tycoon Margaret Reeb (See Figure 6). The majority of the news/feature photographs, 93.9 percent, were positive. Advertisements carried positive portrayals of aging as shown in the aging surfer promoting Kellogg's cereal (See Figure 7), and a grandfather and granddaughter fly-fishing as part of a financial ad. *Time* set forth a positive view of aging in both advertisements and news/feature photographs and provided almost half, 47.2 percent, of all the older adults coded in the study. Few ads concerning aging such as wrinkle cream, adult diapers, vitamin supplements, and medical drugs were carried in *Time*, 5.1 percent,

as compared to advertisements about age found in *Ladies Home Journal*, 37.6 percent, and *Reader's Digest*, 31 percent.

Portrayals for *Reader's Digest* and *Sports Illustrated* parallel the other two titles. *Reader's Digest*, like *Time*, features many aging celebrities split between news/feature photographs and advertisements. Jack Lemmon and Walter Matthau promote their latest film, and Lauren Bacall talks about her work while Arnold Palmer promotes Ray O Vac batteries for hearing aids, and June Allyson endorses Depends. There are feature photographs for a story on assisted suicide and another on children learning about aging through nursing homes or contact with grandparents. *Reader's Digest* carries an equal number of advertisements to news/feature photographs and presents an almost equal number of men to women, 53.4 percent to 46.6 percent. The title supports a positive image in both news/feature and advertising photographs, and adults age 65 and over in the magazine make up 27.6 percent of all older adults in the study.

Sports Illustrated has more the feel of *Ladies Home Journal* with so many young faces that aging adults stand out as almost absurd. The title provides the lowest number of older adults coded in the study, only 10.3 percent. There are positive pictures of famous aging individuals such as Bob Hope and the Pope, and lesser known individuals such as the 65-year-old who shot eight under par, the 77-year-old baseball coach, and the jovial, aging members of Martha's Coffee Club (See Figure 8). In fact, 100 percent of the news/feature photographs were rated positive, and 90 percent of the advertisements portrayed positive older adults in *Sports Illustrated*. However, like *Ladies Home Journal*, few aging images appear in *Sports Illustrated*, sometimes an entire issue only carrying one photograph of an older person.

Interestingly, there were three ads coded in the study that poke fun at aging, reminiscent of the comic or satirical style similar to Wendy's Clara Pellar of the 1970s. Two of these appear in *Sports Illustrated* and the other in *Ladies Home Journal*. *Sports Illustrated* shows an attractive young woman dancing with an old geezer promoting BIC pens (See Figure 9). A second ad promotes warm clothing with a photograph of an older woman who looks more like the wicked witch or an old crone than a nurturing female. The text pertains to the consumer staying as warm and dry as her pot roast (See Figure 10). The third ad, in *Ladies Home Journal*, depicts a retired nun endorsing the American Physical Therapy Association (See Figure 11).

Prominent themes and products promoted also reveal portrayal. Again contrary to the perception that the elderly retreat from society, the work theme dominates the coded photographs with 49.5 percent as shown in Table 9. This is primarily due to the inclusion of news/feature photographs, which accounts for 81 percent of the photographs featuring work versus 19 percent of advertisements featuring work. Family, the second most predominant theme is also carried in more news/feature photographs than advertisements. On the other hand, advertising shows predominance in the life-enhancement and romance themes.

Table 9:
Themes found in Photographs of Older Adults

	Overall Totals	News Totals	Advertising Totals
Work	49.5	81.0	19.0
Family	16.5	62.9	37.1
Leisure	10.8	47.8	52.2
Other	10.8	78.3	21.7
Romance	7.5	6.3	93.8
Life-enhancement	4.7	30.0	70.0

When considering all news/feature photographs, the work theme makes up over 60 percent of the total. The romance theme comprises over 20 percent of all advertisements.

Marketers have tuned into the needs of the elderly through products and services that deal with aging's losses, or simply ignore it. Likewise, they have picked up on the new trend that older people want romance. Articles in every issue of the mature market magazines cover the older person's love life, keeping a marriage alive, or how to find companionship. The idea of older people as romantic individuals has not been widespread or accepted among the general public, however. Typically in advertising, ideas and images are presented as the ideal rather than the reality. The results found in themes used in photographs of older adults mirror this dichotomy. While romance and life-enhancement are the predominant themes among advertisements, they rank fourth and fifth out of six overall themes. Work, family and leisure rank first, second and third in overall themes as they do in news/feature photographs.

Themes or activities methodology was taken from a study in family life textbooks with photographs containing older people. Shepherd-Stolley and Hill (1996) report leisure ranked first, romance second, and family third. Work and receiving care ranked eighth and ninth among ten categories. Obviously none of these findings can be compared directly because they stem from three different mediums: news, advertising and education. However, they reveal some interesting patterns and opposing agendas depending on the medium. The practice of using themes and activities to look at both news/feature and advertising photographs in magazines broadens the portrayal of aging as well as providing some important variables for further study.

The topic/product category was not nearly as revealing given 67 percent of the photographs fell into the “other” category as shown in Table 10. This was most likely a result of the news/feature photographs that made up over 87 percent of the “other” category. Most news/feature photographs were still shots of working individuals with a caption to describe their work or accomplishments. Advertisements and news/feature photographs split equally in the retirement classification and almost equally in the leisure and financial classifications, however the total percent of all photographs coded as retirement and leisure categories was very low, less than 5 percent. The two major products found in the 72 advertisements coded included medical or drugs at 37.5 percent and food and household at 18 percent.

Table 10:
Topics/Products Found in Photographs of Older Adults

<u>Topic/Products</u>	<u>Overall Photo %</u>	<u>News Totals</u>	<u>Advertising Totals</u>
Other	67.0	87.3	12.7
Medical/Drugs	16.0	20.6	79.4
Food/House	6.1	- 0 -	100.0
Financial	4.2	44.4	55.6
Leisure	2.4	40.0	60.0
Retirement	1.9	50.0	50.0
Clothing	1.4	33.3	66.7
Personal Hygiene	.9	- 0 -	100.0

While leisure ranked third among the theme category overall (See Table 9), the topics or products being promoted in a leisure setting concerned something different (See Table 10). Many times a leisure setting was used to promote a life-enhancement product such as Depends, Ensure, vitamins or a medical drug for impotence as shown in Figure 12, or heart disease illustrated in Figure 13. While past studies have found products a valuable variable in coding advertisements, the category did not prove very descriptive

and would need to be redefined and relabeled if used again with advertisements and news/feature photographs. Creating a new classification in both the theme and topic categories to code head shots which were often relegated to “work” or “other” might be a solution.

Chapter 5

Monitoring Media Portrayal of Aging Is Complex, Yet Necessary

Conclusion

As the nation grays it will remain important to monitor how the media portrays aging. The study was conducted to build on the limited research in the portrayal and representation of the elderly in general consumer magazines. By their nature magazines create limitations in that they are primarily niche media with very targeted audiences. Other limitations include the subjectivity of coders as well as human error. In addition, special situations found in *Time*'s feature of the life and death of Deng Xioping producing seven elderly images of the man, and *Ladies Home Journal*'s feature on Barbara Walters producing four elderly images of the woman may have skewed the results.

Despite these limitations, precaution was taken to eliminate as much bias as possible including: random selection of magazines with large national circulation, extensive training with specific criteria for determining age, and selecting photos where aging features and characteristics are identifiable. Because of the difficulty in determining age especially between 55 and 65, a cleaner representation may be simply coding any older adults on the appearance of age based only on specified criteria regardless of age. In many popular consumer magazines, the appearance of age is so rare, any photographs of people in their 50s, 60s and 70s jump off the page.

Segmentation did not prove advantageous here as in other studies (Robinson & Skill, 1995; Roberts & Zhou, 1997).

Another limitation involves coding multiple titles and then reporting the overall findings. As found here, it makes a difference as to whether the older adult is slightly under-represented at 12.3 percent overall or largely under-represented at 7.3 percent as shown in *Ladies Home Journal* and 4.6 percent in *Sports Illustrated*. What is the best way to report these statistics? Which one tells the real story about the portrayal and representation of aging, and more importantly, about how society views aging portrayals in media? One of the most meaningful ways to grapple with the representation issue is through a statement made by Hollenshead and Ingersoll (1982),

...a reader of Good Housekeeping in 1967 would have to read through two issues before finding an older woman in an advertisement. Similarly, the reader would read through 1.2 1977 issues of Good Housekeeping before seeing an older woman. (p.37).

In 1997, a reader could page through one issue of *Ladies Home Journal* and find as few as two older women and as many as 15. Seniors have definitely gained in representation and acquired a positive portrayal through the media over the last twenty to thirty years.

Some scholars fear this active, leisure-oriented, positive portrayal is as damaging for the elderly as the negative curmudgeon of the 1960s and 1970s, especially with those older adults who are homebound or suffering from the inevitable frailties of aging (Butler, 1975; Kvasnicka et al., 1982; Mares & Cantor, 1992). While the discussion about damage from a false image ensues, common sense tells us that

93.9 percent positive portrayal is not reality for any group within the population. If media is to mirror our society and help members learn about a group who they may have little or no contact with, it is prudent to show all sides concerning that population segment. This false idealism is not just experienced by seniors however. Consider the sleek models with perfect hair, new clothes and bright futures that bombard all adults daily through magazines, television, movies and newspapers. It stems from our culture's identity with the Greeks to idolize youth, and perfection of the human body and spirit. The impending question is will the overly positive images of older adults change our attitudes about aging? After viewing the 1997 media including magazines, televisions and newspapers, the Harris Poll respondents of 1975 would have to find a new statement to describe the elderly other than "ineffectual, sedentary people whiling away their days in isolation" (p. 47).

Future research needs to address the effects of mass media portrayals as well as the contents. More studies on the reactions to media content are needed and especially within the socialization and psychological orientations of individuals both young and old. The double standard revealed in *Ladies Home Journal* demands more study in women's magazines as women age and continue to enter the workforce and public life. Young women need healthy, realistic role models. Their media content requires a well-rounded focus on all aspects of their development, not just maintaining or masking a superficial beauty naturally ravaged by age.

Continued investigation on a routine basis of all media will determine any trends or changes in the representation and portrayal of older adults. Langmeyer (1993) advocates a five-year periodic examination of the elderly in media to track changes and

the current reflected social reality. Do the three satirical ads recorded in the study signal a return to the negative view of aging in the 1960s and 1970s? Certainly the inclusion of humorous perspectives like these would result in a varied view of the elderly and ultimately a more balanced view. Have we become so afraid of aging that we can no longer joke about it? Or is it simply not tasteful? With all the media criticism on excessive crime coverage and the popular label “bearer of bad news,” the overly positive media portrayal found among the elderly appears to be an anomaly.

A study over time comparing both news/feature and advertising photographs could produce some valuable results. The news/feature variable in this study definitely broadened the portrayal of aging and brought out some interesting aspects not found in advertising alone. One expects advertising to be idealized, positive and somewhat artificial. Past advertising studies have revealed a very limited role for the elderly in society while the news/feature aspect shows a considerable number of older adults still working and making significant contributions to society. The news/feature format influenced representation findings as well with almost half of all older adults coded being found in the photographs of *Time*. Over 80 percent of these photographs were coded as news/feature. Studies looking at both younger and older adults in these two formats of advertising and news could be valuable. As our world becomes more visual with increasing information transferred through quick sound bites and catchy pictorial formats, photographs, the images they portray, and the influence they carry continue to be important.

Studies that combine various media could also be helpful in supplying a broader view of how aging portrayals are interpreted by different individuals. It is well

documented that individuals cultivate specific media usage patterns (Nussbaum et al., 1989; Robinson & Skill, 1995). Surveying a variety of media used by a particular group might give insight into how or why the receivers hold various perceptions of what they see, hear or read. As media continues to fragment with cable television, an increase in magazine titles each year, and declining newspaper readership by young adults, it becomes increasingly more difficult to assess what media images particular groups receive. It is entirely possible that a young person today would rarely see an image of an older person depending on the media they used and considering the individual magazine results found here. Much work lies ahead.

End Notes

1. Contextual age, a multi-dimensional construct by Rubin and Rubin (1982-1986), assesses the psychological changes associated with aging using indicators of health, social interaction, mobility, life satisfaction, social activity and economic security that are not consistently correlated with chronological age but relate to self concept.
2. Age measures—three cognitive age measures include: the age decade scale measures feel age, look age, interests age and do age; the single item categorical measure asks respondents to describe themselves by one of three adjectives young, middle-age and old; the semantic differential measure uses adjective pairs and canonical functions to determine referents old, middle-aged and you (respondent).
3. VALS is a psychographic research tool used in marketing which studies values, attitudes and lifestyles of consumers.

4. Cultivation theory by Gerbner (1973) remains the best documented and most investigated among theories of long term media effect. The theory holds that modern media has acquired a central place in daily life and dominates our symbolic environment substituting distorted messages for reality through personal experience and interaction in society. It has been primarily tested with violence and television (McQuail, 1994, p. 364).

Appendix A

Publication Name:

Issue:

Coder/Date:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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[illegible]

IMAGE RATING

Competent/Incompetent
Attractive/Unattractive
Warm/Distant
Pleasure/Pain
Relaxed/Worried
Accept/Avoid Aging

THEME/ACTIVITY

- 1) Leisure
- 2) Romance
- 3) Family
- 4) Working
- 5) Life Enhancement
- 6) Other

TOPIC/PRODUCT

- 1) Retirement
- 2) Medical Drugs
- 3) Vacation/Leisure
- 4) Personal Hygiene
- 5) Insurance/Financial
- 6) Clothing
- 7) Food/Household
- 8) Other

Appendix B

List of Figures

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- Figure 13. Romance the Setting for Most Ads Promoting Impotence Drugs

You're 5'5" now. Will you be 5'5" when you're 80?



If you looked into a crystal ball, what would you see? A street corner, and a fragile little old lady, desperately looking for a merit-badge-seeking scout? Or would you see an older version of you; a few more wrinkles, but still 5'5" and crossing the street by yourself? Start taking General Nutrition Center's Preventive Nutrition® OsteoSure™. PN® OsteoSure™ has an advanced, patented form of calcium called calcium citrate malate, which may prevent bone loss up to 40% better than the most popular form of calcium, and is as easy to absorb as milk.* So start taking GNC's Preventive Nutrition® OsteoSure™ today. And perhaps, that little old lady in your future won't be so little after all. Exclusively at GNC.



GNC LiveWell

Call toll free 1-800-477-4462 for the GNC location nearest you. www.gnc.com *Study involved post-menopausal women over 55. ©1998 General Nutrition Centers.

BABY LUST

Continued from page 153

What else am I doing with my life, anyhow, that actually *matters*? Why are we given all these eggs if I'm just going to let them go down the drain? And have you noticed how much more capable at a much earlier age each subsequent child is? I mean, my oldest can barely dress himself, whereas our third child is hanging up his clothes. At this rate, the fourth child would be doing the family laundry before he was out of diapers!

Given my state of mind, I obviously can't be trusted to make such a momentous decision. But then, I can't trust my husband to make it, either, because he's suspiciously rational about the whole matter. He's fckered out, he tells me. He can hardly tend to the three kids we have. His job isn't getting any easier; he has to put in more hours just to stay in place. He doesn't see earning our way to a nice retirement as it is, not with three college tuitions and skyrocketing auto insurance. If he were ten years younger, well, he'd definitely consider

it. But he's not, so . . . case closed.

Sometimes I turn to my estrogen-addled girlfriends, especially the ones who are inclined to just Go For It, because they understand what it's like to cherish your own status quo at the same time you're conspiring to shatter it. None of them says to me, "But what about your career?" They're all on the brink of sabotaging their own. Look at Laura, my friend in Detroit. Two kids, great husband, great life, super job. She runs a couple of bond portfolios for a big investment-management firm, earns good money, has the respect of her mostly male peers and a pretty high place in the Feminist Hall of Fame. It's all so perfect, she can't bear another minute of it. She wants . . . a baby.

"I want a little of that chaos back," she whispers to me, as though she's uttered the nuttiest thing imaginable, which she has. "I see the most wonderful decade of my life closing, and I just have to make the most of these years while I have them. I'd have to cut back on my

work schedule, maybe even telecommute—but it would be such a short time, really, I'm sure I could make it up. And if I didn't? Well, what could be more important?"

Then there's Claire, who has just learned that years of fertility treatment, barrels of progesterone and one IVF procedure have netted her—voilà!—a pregnancy. Maybe even a multiple pregnancy. She tells me how she did the Easy One Step Home Test, in the bathroom at the haircolorist's, before she had her gray hennaed out, and I hang on every word. Together we interpret her results, the subtle but meaningful variations in the shade of pink the stick turned—not bluish pink, but a really *pink* pink—and I am simultaneously stricken with delight and grief, joy and envy. I feel like picking up a pregnancy test on my way home, to have it on hand "just in case."

It's sick, this desire of mine to seek out pregnant or about-to-be-pregnant friends, because I can hardly bear to be in their company. When Eileen announced, over plates of *(continued)*

Keep the character. Beat the wrinkles.



Before



After 24 weeks

*All photos unretouched,
individual results
may vary.*



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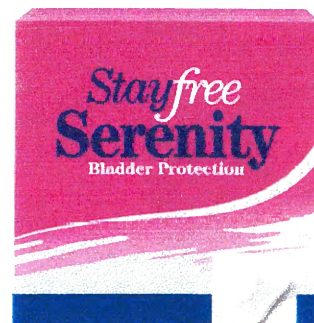
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53, knew just what to do, and so did sev- of Horace Bryant Jr. Drive in Atlantic that man in the eye, pointed to the door st. "It's total arrogance," fumes Bryant, ason than her neighbors to be ticked off. is named after her father, a former state e commissioner who died in 1983. She

an W., f leav- V. says. l how nother r at my at."

have e alone in the Mirage Wynn a Las anza a walk in a dis- have it re- the lit- . How

ians bend over backward to please an anger? asks the man who would be in th Wynn. Oh, the hypocrisy! But even pped. Seven of the 10 homeowners on d yes to Wynn's buyout offer, because rms or they decided there was no way antic City, after all, where Monopoly is uses and you can build a hotel. "It's a enter Clarence Mobley, 46, on the ve house he built himself. He said the n Wynn was about \$200,000, which is et value.

billboard-size NO TUNNEL sign in front r-bedroom house. But they can almost eping closer, with bids on the roadway and it isn't just Steve Wynn who's be- ids are within projections, he will have Christie Whitman and Atlantic City

Mayor James Whelan with him, all of them gospel of small personal sacrifices for the great If you build it, suckers will come. As will thousan lions of dollars in tax revenues and a rising tide perity that "will float all boats," as Whitman's fl

"Tell me about it," says Lillian E., a retiree ee who heard the same hustle when the casinos 20 years ago. Today, Bryant's neighborhood is middle-class, mostly black area in all of boo- lantic City. Bryant says she's not against new against uprooting good neighborhoods so outs tend they're in Shangri-La. "Steve Wynn mus- thing good on these people. The state is bickering to pay \$200 million for public education b

the Supreme they'll spend to build a priv for a billionaire

In fact, V pay \$55 millio jected \$330 m the 1.8-mile ro spokesman Al who shameless the holdout res ing to bluff mo of Mirage, say will provide re ments that w years ago and neighborhood Mayor Whelan other roadway have displaced

homeowners. He's sorry about Bryant Drive, b City doesn't take this next step—"Not just another 'Oh, wow!' destination resort"—it will die. H Circus and Boyd Gaming may build next to Mir: Le Jardin, which will resemble a gigantic terrari

They could have Siegfried and Roy swingin and it wouldn't change the take on Bryant Dri and three homeowner associations lost a lawsuit takeover, which is now on appeal. In March the filed suit in federal court, alleging a civil rights v state stands prepared to wield the power of emi a legal term meaning "we can do anything we w Bryants and their neighbors—Gussie Ellis and five, and Pierre Hollingsworth's family of three from a local minister—are digging in. The stree after a man who stood for something, Lillian V living room. "My husband was a fighter, and have allowed this. We're not going anywhere."



Lillian E. Bryant, with banner, and mother Lillian W. by their house

Old War Wounds Do Die



The Civil War was over before they were born, but they knew its bitterness through their spouses. **DAISY ANDERSON**, 96, and **ALBERTA MARTIN**, 90, are two of the last widows of Civil War veterans. Daisy's husband Robert Anderson was a former slave and Union soldier. Alberta married Confederate infantryman William Jasper Martin when she was 21 and he was 82. When he died, she married his grandson. The two widows met for the first time to lay a rose each on the coffin of an unknown soldier whose remains were found on a Gettysburg battlefield and reburied.

HERE IN HER 80s. IN HER room stands an ancient up- ings a photograph of Reeb oosevelt. The topic of her nobility of the pioneer gold s from it—is a variation on nerely a wistful ex-school- as a hing

d be ough does nots rson mil- me- dent ever may garet iero- n. A roes ncial o the be- 1. Clin- treat dis- new sud-

son into a \$1 billion lode of at the peak is a scant 2.5 2 National Park. Environ- agamine would poison the ive lawsuits against Crown nd-the-clock extraction ef- ped in, and after months of

struck some as more sentin holdings, on lease to Crown its goldfield—a portion so la contingent on her selling he they can be part of the excha

But Reeb will not play le negotiations, she claims. "An



PAULINE REEB FOR TIME

Reeb stands tall and resolute for her claim

agreed shock. proach have i interest part, th shrewd less it' also re betwe "We M about c is not out sel

Th corpor least t her co seem i David head v leasing doubts day," b damn not. Sh

That may be all she enc chairwoman of the White Ho Quality, says ominously, "T arrange this agreement." Or swapping only the land it ow island in a sea of government ground holdings are vast, he



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fangled underground heating system, which works something like an electric blanket. About 14 miles of plastic-covered cables, spaced one foot apart, run sideline to sideline and are buried six inches beneath the surface. A General Electric press release touting the system promised "September-like playing conditions throughout the season. Instead of a frozen field, the Wisconsin contests will be played on a green, soft, frost-free turf."

Meaning the Frozen Tundra isn't really frozen? "Well, the system doesn't do much good when the air temperature drops below 20," Edlebeck says. "But the field's not frozen nearly as often as it's said to be. I guess it sounds cute to say *frozen tundra*. And at least when ESPN's Chris Berman says it, he says it as a joke. What bugs you is when TV announcers say it's a frozen tundra and they haven't even been on the field. My mother used to watch all the games on TV, and, you know, that really used to burn her up."

It has been 40 years since quarterback Babe Parilli and tight end Gary Knafelc made opening day (Sept. 29, 1957) at

Lambeau a success for the Packers, combining on a fourth-quarter touchdown pass that clinched a 21-17 win over the Bears. It has been 32 years since the name of the facility was changed from City Stadium to honor team founder and longtime coach Curly Lambeau, the bon vivant who won seven championships during his 31 seasons in Green Bay, married three times and in 1922 paid the club's \$250 league entry fee with money he got from the sale of a friend's car.

Just as the 1967 championship game is rarely called anything but the Ice Bowl, some other games have been so compelling that Packers fans have slapped titles on them, too. The Snow Bowl was an '85 game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers; a 16-inch snowfall blanketed the city, and many fans drove their snowmobiles to the stadium, where, predictably, the Packers whipped their warm-weather opponents 21-0. The Instant Replay Game? That was the one in '89 during which Bears coach Mike Ditka went ballistic after officials reversed themselves and announced that Majkowski hadn't been over the line of scrimmage

after all when on the last play of the game he'd tossed a game-winning touchdown pass to Sharpe. The hard feelings run so deep that the Chicago media guide still carries an asterisk next to the result of that game.

From 1973 through '92 the Packers languished, qualifying for the playoffs only in the 1982 strike-shortened season. But Green Bay fans still laugh about the 1980 season opener at Lambeau in which the Bears blocked Chester Marcol's overtime field goal attempt, only to see Marcol catch the ricochet and scoot 25 yards for the winning score. Marcol looked like an accountant in his thick, black-frame glasses, and he ran as if he had pails on his feet.

Nitschke's finest Lambeau moment came in the 1965 NFL title game against the Cleveland Browns. He was assigned to shadow the great Jim Brown, who finished with just 50 yards rushing on 12 carries, and his diving, fingertip deflection of a sure touchdown pass intended for Brown sealed the Packers' 23-12 win. Hornung outdid Brown with a scintillating 105-yard performance. After scoring a third-quarter touchdown, Hornung

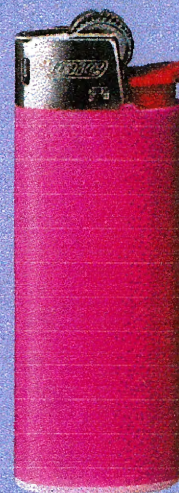


Martha's Coffee Club members talk of nothing but the Packers—or pay for their transgressions.

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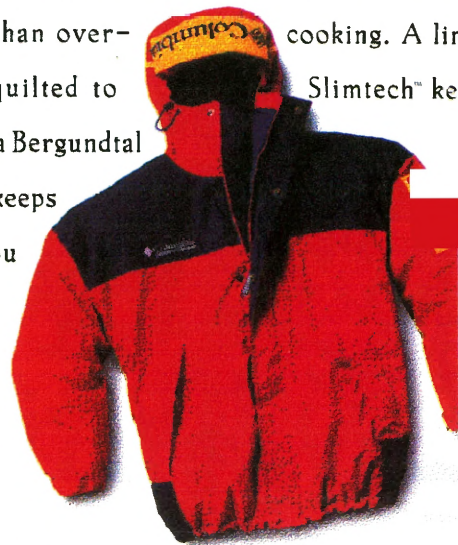
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THE FAMILY WITH 40 KIDS

Continued

Camille gets additional support from her older daughters, who both enrolled in area colleges so they could continue to live with her. They love working with their siblings. "My mom is my inspiration, my light, my everything," says Jaclyn. "[And] I'd rather be with my

brothers and sisters than my friends." Adds Renae: "There's nothing really different about our family, except that we have a lot of kids."

While Camille revels in their love and help, she still feels the stress of being hundreds of miles away from her husband. That, in turn, has contributed to her ongoing battle with obesity. In 1991, she reached

a high of 438 pounds.

Today, after years of yo-yoing up and down the scale, Camille weighs about 200 pounds and is hoping to get down to a size 16. "Fighting for the handicapped is easy for me, because it's a choice. But weight is something I've been cursed with, and it is truly my handicap," she says with a sigh.

Samaritans under fire

While no one doubts the value of Camille's work, many do challenge her caretaking methods. "In many ways, despite being very well intentioned, the practices used by the Geraldis are a little out of step with where the state of the field is here in the late nineties," says Helene Good, executive director of the Miami-based Community Committee for Developmental Handicaps.



Jaclyn joins in painting time



Camille's birthday

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